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ABSTRACT

A student's selection of a college or university should include an evaluation of the library and its services and resources. Identifying and evaluating a good library are important in determining the level of educational opportunities an institution will provide. This publication is designed to help students make a decision about which college or university to attend by providing questions to consider in three critical areas: library facilities, resources, and services. Facilities questions include: Is the library building easy to find? When you are in the library, can you easily find your way around? Is the library space inviting? Is there adequate space for users and collections? Is there a variety of study spaces? Are the library hours convenient? Can the library accommodate any disabilities or special needs you may have? and Are multimedia production facilities available for your use? In terms of resources, careful consideration and evaluation of information in all formats is important. Questions should include: Is there an adequate collection in a variety of formats? Is the collection sufficiently current? Is there a Web-based catalog? Are there electronic tools for locating magazine and journal articles? Are required readings available electronically? Are resources available electronically in full-text format? Are library resources available remotely? and Will the library readily obtain materials for you that are not owned by the library? To understand the variety of services offered, students should consider these questions: Is sufficient staff available to help you? Is the staff friendly, helpful, knowledgeable, and available when you need them? What instruction programs are available to teach you how to use the library? Are computer terminals available and easily accessible? What ways can you access the library from your personal computer? Are there fees for services, such as printing? If so, are the fees reasonable? What services are available on a 24-hour basis? Can you get help electronically, such as via an e-mail question to a library staff member? How does the library support distance education if the college or university offers courses you can enroll in from off-campus? and Does the library support emerging technologies such as laptops, palm pilots, and e-books? (AEF)

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A Student's Guide to Evaluating Libraries in Colleges and Universities

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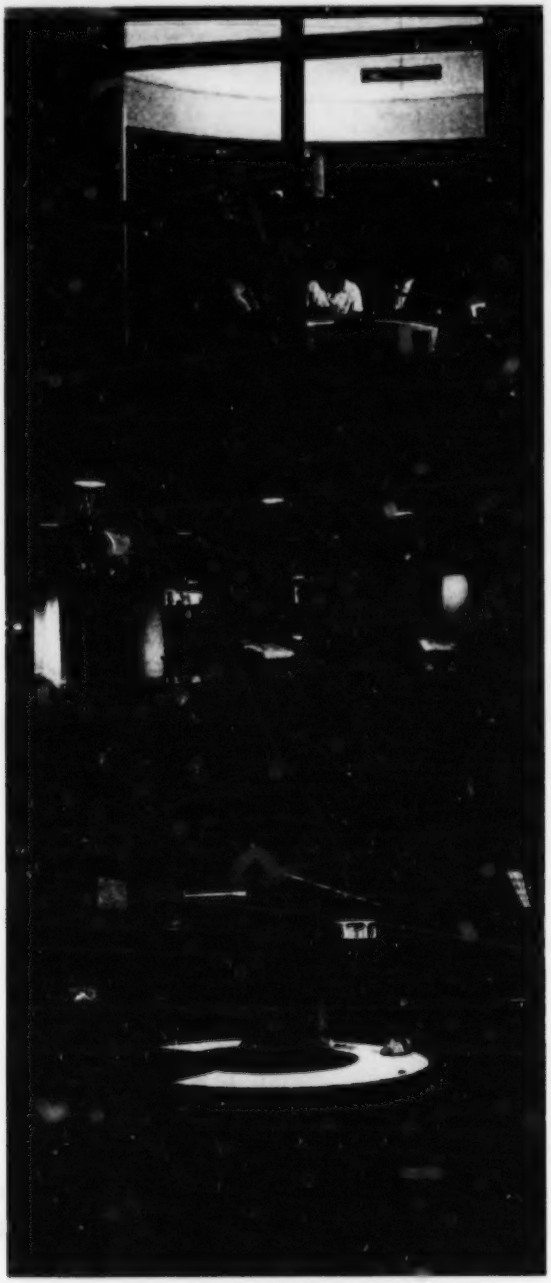
Association of College and Research Libraries

A Student's Guide to Evaluating Libraries in Colleges and Universities

Selecting the college or university that you will attend is among the most important decisions you will make in your life. You should carefully examine all aspects of an academic institution including the faculty, academic programs, and facilities. While there are a wide variety of guides and lists ranking institutions, you will need to choose an institution that reflects your personal goals.

One of the factors to consider when choosing your college is how well its

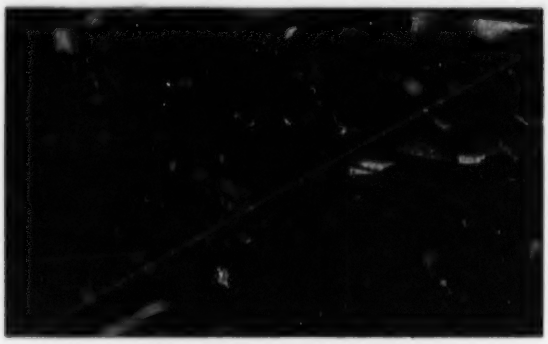


library will help you succeed in this increasingly complex and often chaotic information age. According to some experts, the amount of information available will more than double by the time you obtain your undergraduate degree. Therefore, locating and evaluating information are critical skills in becoming and remaining an educated individual. The library is an important source of information, and the academic library staff will help you develop these valuable skills.

Your selection of a college or university should include an evaluation of the library and its services and resources. Identifying and evaluating a good library are important in determining the level of educational opportunities an institution will provide you during your academic career. To help you make a decision about which college or university to attend, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) has prepared this Guide to Evaluating Library Services on Campus with questions to consider in three critical areas: services, facilities, and resources.

Facilities

The electronic information that is accessible from your residence and other locations may meet some of your information needs, but the



Photos of academic libraries designed by Perry Dean Rogers and Partners: Architects.

campus library will provide an important environment for your education. In the library, you will have the opportunity to receive individual and group instruction, to study alone or in groups, to obtain assistance with assignments, to use books and journals, to use computers for accessing databases and web-based resources, or just to meet with friends.

- Is the library building easy to find?
- When you are in the library, can you easily find your way around?
- Is the library space inviting?
- Is there adequate space for users and collections?
- Is there a variety of study spaces?
- Are the library hours convenient?
- Can the library accommodate any disabilities or special needs you may have?
- Are multimedia production facilities available for your use?

Resources

A quality library collection consists of information in a variety of formats and requires sustained support over many years for adequate development. Increasingly, electronic information is supplementing the wealth of print and other types of information available in most libraries. However, most information remains available only in print and will remain so for the foreseeable future. As a result, you will find important information available in a variety of formats. Careful consideration and evaluation

of information in all formats is always important.

- Is there an adequate collection in a variety of formats?
- Is the collection sufficiently current?
- Is there a web-based catalog?
- Are there electronic tools for locating magazine and journal articles?
- Are required readings available electronically?
- Are resources available electronically in full-text format?
- Are library resources available remotely?
- Will the library readily obtain materials for you that are not owned by the library?

Services

Library services support your college experience. These services may range from providing photocopy machines to having librarians available to assist you in locating information from a variety of sources. Therefore, it is important for you to understand and appreciate the variety of services offered to enhance your chances for academic success.

- Is sufficient staff available to help you?
- Is the staff friendly, helpful, knowledgeable, and available when you need them?
- What instruction programs are available to teach you how to use the library?
- Are computer terminals available and easily accessible?
- What ways can you access the library from your personal

computer?
- Are there fees for services, such as printing? If so, are the fees reasonable?
- What services are available on a 24-hour basis?
- Can you get help electronically, such as via an e-mail question to a library staff member?
- How does the library support distance education if the college or university offers courses you can enroll in from off-campus?
- Does the library support emerging technologies such as laptops, palm pilots, and e-books?

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